

## [Aunt Mary Davenport]

1

[?] And [?] - Life [?] [?] Words

EDITORIAL FIELD COPY

by

Mrs. Florence Angermiller, P. W.

Page 1

232

Pioneer Experiences

of Mary Davenport

and Nancy Kelley, deceased, residents of Sabinal UVALDE COUNTY DiSTRICT #10

RECEIVED

[?] 15 [?]

WORKS PROGRESS

ADMINISTRATION

SAN ANTONIO

TEXAS

AUNT MARY DAVENPORT

as told by

Mrs. Emma Kelley Davenport

"I remember ma mighty well. We all called her ma or mother. She was born in Missouri in 1823, and a daughter of Captain John Crane. Captain Crane was a boyhood friend and playmate of Sam Houston and both of them enlisted in General Jackson's army in Tennessee when the war broke out with the Creek Indians.

"Of course, she was a grown, married woman when she came to this country but I've heard the older ones tell about her. She was a tall woman and large too. She had a handsome face, black hair and hazel eyes. She was active and a good buisness woman. She managed her own buisness many a year.

"She first married James Elkins of Walker County in 1839 and they lived in the county until he died, leaving her with a daughter, Polly Ann, and ranch stock to take care of.

"She was so pretty and young, of course, the bachelors were soon courting her but the red-headed one named John Davenport won her. He brought her and the young Polly Ann to the Sabinal canyon in 1852 in the train of settlers, among whom were some of his relatives and some of hers: the Cranes, Davenports, Kellys, Fenleys, Old Man McCormick and Captain William Ware. They settled in the Sabinal canyon at that time but in 1854 John moved his family to the D'Hanis settlement. They later settled on Ranchero Creek and continued in the ranching buisness. [??] Texas

2

"About 1858, John Davenport was captain of a company of minute men that was organized for protection against Indians. Shortly after this, he was killed by Indians and scalped as he was returning home one afternoon riding a mule he had meant to trade

## Library of Congress

off. The Indians overtook him and surrounded him. John fought like a demon but the number of Indians was too great for him. After he fell from the mule, they scalped him. They wanted his red hair.

"Ma took up life again as a widow. She was always ready to go to the sick and rode horseback many a mile at nights to get to a sick bed. And no one ever came to her house without being fed. Many a person made it to her place after a hard journey and whether day or night, it mattered not, she would prepare coffee and something to eat.

"She was a great person to dance. When one of her grandsons or [?] came to her house, she often picked up her fiddle and played but if they played it for her, she didn't sit still long; she got up and danced. She could do regular nigger-jigging and she was a graceful ballroom dancer too.

"Once she went with a crowd to a dance up at Aldine and while they were there, they got word that Indians were in the country. Ross Kennedy and his wife were in the bunch and Mrs. Kennedy says, 'Now, Ross, I'll handle one of the guns and you handle the other and we'll let Mrs. Davenport do the driving.' They were driving a two-horse wagon and had a big bunch of children along. On down the road they discovered that the tap had run off of one of the wheels. They stopped to see what could be done and decided to go back after it. They drove back several miles but never did find that tap. Well, Mrs. Kennedy and me had to take up watch over the wheel, then. But they didn't run into the Indians and made it home all right.

"Not only were the Indians a worry to her, but very often, 'renegades' came to her house. They demanded something to eat and she has told how frightened she was many a time when she found them suddenly in her house.

3

"Renegades were men who were hiding out or going to Mexico to keep from fighting in the Civil War and they were bad characters, lots of times. Tales had traveled of how they had

## Library of Congress

done mischief in other places and of course sh she didn't know what they might do. Once there were several of them stopped a and demanded food. She set about cooking and fixing a meal as quickly as she could. They eyed the walls and ceiling and examined things in the house. She told us afterward that one of the men stood right on the plank of the floor she kept her money under. She said she dared not look at the plank because they were watching her. He never did discover the loose plank and the money was saved.

“For years she had a store about two miles east of where Sabinal now is. It was the old San Antonio road then and still is. The road forked at Uvalde and one went to Eagle Pass one road went to Brackettville. Long mule trains and ox trains used to come by. I've seen them day after day. The Mexicans used to drive two-wheel ox carts and tied the yoke on the steers' heads with rawhide strings. It was cruel the way those poor steers had to hold that load on their heads and pull the loaded wagons too.

“Ma had her stuff hauled out from San Antonio more by the neighbors than by the ox trains, though she sent for some of her merchandise like that too.

“We have an old leather-bound account book she used in her store in 1872 and 1873. She kept a regular bookkeeper and this fine handwriting is his. Some of these old accounts give you an idea of what they generally came into the store and bought. Now here's one account — it's liquor entirely — including most of the 'old account' of thirty-six dollars and seventy-five cents:

1872

Aug. 28th To old account ————— \$ 36.75

“ " Brot from another page ——— 6.00

Oct. 1st To one treat ————— .50

## Library of Congress

" 8th " one bottle whiskey ————— .75

4

"The account shows it reached sixty-five dollars and ninety cents but doesn't show that it was over paid.

"Here are accounts of Billy Biggs, Clabe Davenport, Ambrose Davenport, George Johnson, John Binnion, Clabe Davenport's hand (Mexican), John [?], John Miller, Charles Ritcher, John Rinehart, Joe Howel, George [Billard?] Henry Taylor, Monroe Fenley, John Patterson, [?] Rielly, Wendy Buckloo, George Johnson, Jr., J. H. Kennedy, John Kennedy, Ben [?], William Patterson, August Rothe, Jasper Tatum, Henry Patterson, Jack Gibson, A. [?], Samuel Johnson, J. D. Fenley (father of Monroe Fenley), J. C. Ware, A. J. Crane, Jeff Johnson and several Mexican accounts.

"You'll notice that a box of sardines cost thirty cents and the men were great on coming in and buying a pocket handkerchief which usually sold for forty cents, though some are recorded for thirty cents. Then here are other prices:

8 yards calico ————— \$ 1.00

1 box hairpins ————— .25

1 pair sox ————— .30

1 " stockings ————— .30

1 bottle musk ————— .25 (perfume)

6 lbs starch ————— 1.20

5 yds flannel ————— 2.25

## Library of Congress

2 pairs shoes ————— 2.50

1 " bachelor boots ————— 4.50

4 handkerchiefs ————— 1.40

1 bottle sweet oil ————— .50

1 plug tobacco ————— .20

1 hat ————— 3.50

2 lb candy ————— .25

1 box oysters ————— .23

1 " sardines ————— .30

5

1 can salmon ————— .35

1 " devils ham (deviled ham) - .30

2 1/2 lbs rope ————— .75

1 lb. coffee ————— .25

12 lbs. flour ————— 1.00

2 bottles of cherries ————— 1.50

1 can peaches ————— .50

## Library of Congress

"Ma was a great person to fix things the grandchildren liked. She made a drink she called 'desertine' out of fresh milk, eggs and a powder she bought. When it was cooked it was something like ice cream. All of the children loved to go there. I used to love to go myself, for she always kept so much butter, milk and cheese on hand. She made the finest cheese by using the 'runnet' (renet) from a beef which curdled the milk. Then she used the cheese press to make it firm.

"She was a fine, Christian woman. She never had much of a chance to do church work but she never spared herself or anything she had if it was needed. I've known her to take a pillow off of her own bed to help someone. The preacher always found a friend and helper when he came to her house.

"Besides running her store, she had her own stock. She was under the friendly protection of her old friends and neighbors of that day who looked after her, and helped with her stock but of course there were many Maverick yearlings that belonged to her and were possibly branded other brands because she couldn't be riding after them all the time. But, she didn't seem to miss it and made money all the time. She loaned Reading Black \$2,500 cash to buy the town site of Uvalde. She seemed to have cash ready for anything she might choose to invest in. Like the Bible promises. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days,' is a true saying and I know her kindness to others was returned to her many times. There was one time that she took the last dust of corn meal in her 6 bin to feed a man's horse. He had made it to her place after a hard ride and she had no horse-feed so she gave him the meal for his horse.

"Being of a practical turn, ma was sensible about anything which came up to be done. In hog-killing time, she always got men to help her with the butchering but she usually handled the rifle herself. She would pick out the hog she wanted to kill, aim steadily at him and shoot him right between the eyes everytime. There was someone there to stick the

## Library of Congress

hog but she was capable of that too. If the occasion arose, she could stick a hog as well as shoot one.

"There is a tale told yet among ma's friends of the time she told one of her boys to go out and kill a Maverick yearling. He was gone several hours and came back without the meat and as she was worrying about not having some fresh meat, he said, 'Well don't worry, ma, we'll have some fresh meat by night if we have to kill one of our own!'

"Ma was the mother of six children, who were Polly Ann, the wife of the late Clabe davenport; Katherine, the wife of the late Monroe Fenley; John who was my husband; Ambrose who married [?] Reilly and the two boys who died, Howell and Jim."

7

### NANCY KELLY

Nancy Kelly was a fearless woman, likewise a dependable friend and God-fearing mother. She came to Texas in 1850, a bride of three years and lived two years in Kaufman County with her young husband, Chris, who followed the trail west in 1852 and brought her to live in the Sabinal Canyon.

"My mother was born in Perry County, Illinois, the daughter of Milton Williams. Her grandfather, Hobert , fought under General George Washington in the Revolutionary War. When she was very young her parents brought her to live in Arkansas and there is where she married my father, Chris Kelly, in 1847 near the town of [?].

"You see, she was only about nineteen when she came out here but she was to know a long and useful life and raise a large family. It was more then a year before they had any trouble, to speak of, with the Indians. For a time it was dangerous to leave the house to work in the field or to ride after the stock or even get water from the spring without going armed for fear Indians were hiding close by. It was even necessary, oft' times for my mother to go to the field with my father and hold her baby and his gun while he worked.



## Library of Congress

"The Indians came close to our place many times and they stole lots of stock from all the settlers. They were so bad that my father finally decided to take all his stock to California and leave his family at Uvalde where they'd be safe. Uvalde wasn't more that a little village then but there were soldiers at Fort Clark and many times there were rangers stopped there. Of course, it was much safer for a woman and children to stay in town.

"When my father was getting ready to leave for California, he had the herd all ready and the men who were helping him start were all camped at our place that night. I remember mighty well that one of 8 the cowboys picked me up and stood me in a sugar barrel that was to go in the chuck wagon. Yes, it was brown sugar and a barrel full of it. They were all laughing and talking, trying to keep up their spirits for they knew the journey was long and hard and they'd be many a day.

"But the next morning before day-break, my heart jumped into my throat and I know that many a sob was strangled when my father's voice floated out on the still morning air as he sang this old song: "Wake up, wake up You drowsy sleepers Wake up, wake up! It's almost day! How can you lie and sleep and slumber When your true love is going away!"

"Oh, my, it was hard to see them go. That long trail where Indians were bound to be hiding and waiting and we never knew whether they would ever be seen alive again. The men tried to be cheerful and pass it off as though it were only in the day's work but they were well aware that they were leaving anguished hearts behind.

"Old Man Gid Thompson had his herd with my father's. I guess there were about two thousand head or maybe more, for they bought out other men's stock to take with them. I remember one brand, J B, that my father bought out. My father's brand was L C K and my brand was E M A which stood for my first name, Emma.

"The trail was a long and tedious one and went by way of Fort Stockton. About a year in advance of them, Old Man Ben Biggs and his boys, Jim and Billy, had started to California

## Library of Congress

with a herd, about six hundred, they say. They were starting out that year for California after staying a year at Fort Stockton and they were about four-hundred miles in advance of my father. They had ups and downs on that trip to California and it was pretty hard on them. I have heard him say that when they got to California and they needed to go into town at San Diego, I believe, they were all so ragged and torn up that not 9 a one had a decent pair of pants to ride into town in. John Taylor decided to meet the emergency so he took the wagon sheet and cut a out a pair of pants with a butcher knife and made a pair that he could wear into town. I suppose his leggins hid a great part of the long stitches. The road had been long and the cowboys were worn out, of course. Their beards and hair made them look like wild men. But the wagon sheet came into good play and saved the day. He bought clothes for the other boys you see, and brought them back to camp, so they could all go to town.

“While my father was gone to California, my mother was living in Uvalde. He had taken her and us children there for protection. However, Uvalde wasn't more than a little village then. Anyway, when cool weather came along, my mother decided to go back up to the ranch and kill her hogs for winter. Mrs. Thompson went along and she also took two neighbor boys along horseback. But I know there were not sufficient guns in the wagon for everyone if the Indians should be encountered. But mother started out with all us children in the wagon. We had to go about forty miles up in the canyons but when we reached Nolton Creek on Uvalde Prairie, we noticed a mounted Indian leading another horse. I remember that the horse he was leading seemed a little crippled and I think he tied him and stopped to try to make out what we were doing or how many men there were. My mother told my two oldest brothers to get out and get two long sticks and get on the horses that were hitched to the wagon. They did so and then she told the two boys that were horseback to tie their lariets to the tongue of the wagon and start out. Mrs. Thompson was frightened and was afraid they were all going to be killed, but my mother told her to have faith in the Lord and all would be well. She was courageous and one of the calmest and most serene persons you ever saw. She wasn't easy to get raffled. Her skeme worked like magic

## Library of Congress

because the Indian couldn't tell for sure how many men there were there from where he was, but he could see that there must be four mounted men armed with guns. And the Indians knew men with rifles could shoot straight those days.

10

"My father stayed in California about two years before he sold out his stock and came home. He came by boat, I remember, so he must have taken a train to St. Louis and gone by boat to New Orleans and then to Galveston. We were glad to have him back alive for two years is a long time for a father and a husband to be away. After he sold his cattle in California, he returned and bought up considerable land upon the Blanco and Sabinal. Even after he came back, the Indians were still pilfering and doing mischief. He was taking us across the country one time from Uvalde up to the ranch and we stopped at one of our places at the Blue Water Hole to camp for the night before going on. We unloaded the wagon for the night and went into the house and my father turned the horses loose and they hardly got ten steps before the Indians had them. Next morning we could see what had happened to the horses and my father had to walk about ten miles to get another team to take us on up to our home.

"In later years, my mother was always ready to help the younger folks have a good time. She stayed at home most of the time and worked, but on occasions, she got to go to San Antonio and other places visiting, herself. Once she went to San Antonio with my father in a wagon. It took five days to make the trip there and they went after supplies of one sort and another. She had bought up a great assortment of dry goods and on the way back, of course, they had to stop at noon and let the team rest and eat. In fact, they stopped for all meals and had to camp at nights. My mother was use to working and she found the time heavy on her hands so here is where another butcher knife came into play as a dressmaker's tool. She had the material with her for dresses and she had everything to sew with except scissors. So she took one of her butcher knives and cut her dress out while they were stopped at noon. In those days, it would have been embarrassing to have been caught with a dull butcher knife in your possession, so I suppose the butcher knife

## Library of Congress

was sharp enough to cut dress material too. Well, she set to work and had a complete dress made by the time they got home. Think of its taking five days NOW to go to San Antonio! Times have certainly changed 11 in these few years. She let us go to San Antonio one time, just a bunch of young folks with our brothers. I saw my first street car and I was really thrilled. They had a little mule hitched to it and it pulled the little car right along. They had a zoo up at San Pedro Springs and of course we had to ride on that street car and go to see that zoo. They had animals we had seen all our lives: a coon, a bear and either a wolf or a fox, I don't remember which, but it was some little animal we had seen all our lives. Then they had ducks and geese on the pond and a good collection of fish. Why, we thought it was a splendid zoo.

"Another thing that was astonishing to us was the ice cream we got right in summertime. Some of it was pink and some green and different colors and we surely enjoyed it.

"My father and mother gave a few dances and they were always largely attended. It was a great occasion to us and I got to where I was foolish about dancing. All the old ones were fine dancers and graceful on the floor. We always danced all night. We danced the round dances and square dances too, it didn't matter. Oh, I thought I was just IT if I could dance with John Davenport. He was the most graceful dancer I ever saw on the floor. Usally, we served coffee and cookies or cake. There was always plenty of coffee and plenty of cake. Mother was a good person to entertain and so good to work and help with everything.

"She was the greatest person to romp with children. She was nearly always with them on anything they wanted to do. Especially her grandchildren. You know she went blind at about the age of forty-five and she lived about thirty-five years longer before she passed away. I never saw such a useful person as she was. She never grieved over her blindness but went right along cheerful and working all the time. She could thread a needle by feeling of the thread and the eye of the needle and she would p tch and men mend for hours. She could do fancy bead work too. She was always doing something like that.

## Library of Congress

"I used to work hard on the ranch and would be out of the house, maybe, for two or three hours leaving her inside when she was staying with me and I remember that the only complaint she ever uttered was a kindly question, 'Aren't you ever going to get through, this morning, Emmie?' I look back now , that my wisdom is riper and time has taught me that material things do not bring happiness , and I wish I had known it then so she might not have spent so many lonely hours. She died some years ago and there was not one of us who was not left a memory of her courageous life to model our own by."

-30-